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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on
LD 830, An Act to Protect Maine's Scenic Beauty by Requiring Solar Panel
Fields to Be Hidden from View**

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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: I am Dave Haggan and I have the honor of representing the people of Senate District 10, which includes three municipalities in Hancock County and nine municipalities in Penobscot County. I am pleased to present LD 830, "An Act to Protect Maine's Scenic Beauty by Requiring Solar Panel Fields to Be Hidden from View."

It is undeniable that Maine is a beautiful, scenic state. Traveling throughout the state, on major routes and back roads alike, we are treated to scenes of mountains, lakes, and trees for miles and miles. We must do all we can to preserve our state's natural beauty.

This rationale was the impetus for Maine's 1978 law banning off-premises billboards. Currently three other states – Vermont, Hawaii, and Alaska – have similar policies. The intent of all of these laws is to preserve natural beauty and prevent visual pollution.

Even the most committed climate activist has to admit that fields of solar panels are eyesores that disrupt the natural beauty of our rural areas, coastal vistas, and mountainous regions. Hiding solar fields helps maintain the integrity of these natural views, allowing residents and visitors to enjoy unobstructed vistas and preserving the character of Maine's landscape. This is especially important in places that rely on tourism for economic sustainability, where the visual appeal of the environment is a key draw. Tourism in Maine is a \$9 billion industry.

For similar reasons, visible solar panel fields can negatively impact property values. While the environmental benefits of solar power are clear, the aesthetics of the installation should be carefully considered to avoid unintended consequences for local real estate markets. Hiding or camouflaging these solar fields can alleviate such concerns.

If we are truly dedicated to generating more renewable energy in our state, we need to make these projects more acceptable to the general public. While there's strong public support for clean energy, the installation of solar panel fields can provoke local opposition. Local residents may be more likely to support renewable energy projects if they feel that their concerns are being addressed. In this vein, I think it is important to amend the bill to require that local governments, and not just the Department of Environmental Protection, play a role in any decision regarding the adequacy of screening in their towns.

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This bill doesn't say how the solar fields have to be hidden. It could be a line of trees or bushes, a mural, a fence, etc. but no matter what is chosen, you can basically guarantee it will be more attractive than a field of solar panels.

Thank you for your time today. I encourage you to support LD 830 and would be happy to answer any questions.